

A Chronicle of Holocaust Revisionism, Part 3 (1956-1960)

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This is the third article in a series forming a chronicle of Holocaust revisionism and responses to it from the first years of the Post-War era up to the present. In the first two parts, we surveyed the first decade of Shoah skepticism, from the very first doubts, mainly concerning the 6-million-victim figure, to the first publications of revisionist pioneer and former concentration camp inmate Paul Rassinier, in which the alleged homicidal gas chambers came into focus as the central issue of dispute. Below I will continue this survey with the latter half of the 1950s. Here I am again indebted to Mr. Jean Plantin and his exhaustive documentation *Anthologie chronologique de textes révisionniste des années quarante et cinquante* (A Chronological Anthology of Revisionist Texts from the Forties and Fifties).[\[1\]](#)

1956

Background

Alain Resnais's Holocaust documentary *Nuit et brouillard* (Night and Fog) is released. Lucie Adelsberger's testimony *Auschwitz* published in Germany. Gerald Reitlinger's book *The SS: Alibi of a Nation* is published in London. A German edition of Reitlinger's study *The Final Solution (Die Endlösung)* is published in Berlin. Ota Kraus and Erich Kulka's book *Noc a mlha*, later translated into German as *Nacht und Nebel* (Night and Fog), published in Prague. Helmut Krausnick's *Dokumentation zur Massen-Vergasung* (Documentation of Mass Gassings) is published in Bonn.

Events

Undated. Leon Poliakov, in a 1956 article later appended to some reprinted editions of *Harvest of Hate* (Breviaire de la haine), accuses fellow Holocaust historian Gerald Reitlinger of minimizing the number of Jewish victims:

"Finally, it should be noted that a British researcher, Gerald Reitlinger, in his work The Final Solution (London, 1953), questions the total of 6 million. He asserts that many of the figures were deliberately inflated for psychological reasons—both by the Nazis, who were motivated by an urge to boast of their crimes, and by the Jews, who were influenced by the pessimism typical of victims. He therefore strongly questions some of the figures given by the Nazis. By systematically re-examining the figures given for each country, adopting the lowest figure in each case by way of hypothesis, he arrives at a total between a minimum of 4,200,000 and a maximum of 4,600,000. His heaviest corrections are in the figures for Eastern Poland and the Soviet Union proper. In the case of these two regions, estimates are complicated by population movements during and after the war, and by the total absence of reliable statistical data on the present Jewish population there.

"In our opinion, one who devotes time and effort to making such corrections solely on the basis of psychological considerations must be motivated by similar considerations himself. In Reitlinger's case this could be explained by the typical British penchant for understatement. No doubt there always will be some uncertainty about the exact total of victims claimed by the racist madness. However, the estimated data available are sufficiently abundant and reliable for us to be able accept, as the most probable number, the 'classic' total of 6 million."

Historical context

In June, Gamal Abdel Nasser becomes president of Egypt. In October, the Hungarian revolution breaks out, Red Army troops invade Hungary; Israel invades the Sinai Peninsula and back Egyptian forces toward the Suez Canal, the United Kingdom and France begin bombing Egypt to force the reopening of the canal. The revolt in Hungary is quashed in mid-November. In December, Fidel Castro returns to Cuba.



Revisionist pioneer Paul Rassinier

1957

Background

The former commandant of the concentration camp (and alleged "auxiliary extermination camp") Stutthof, Paul Werner Hoppe, is sentenced to nine years of imprisonment at a trial held in Bochum, West Germany. The former Dutch SS man Willem Sassen conducts a number of tape-recorded question-and-answer sessions with Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires, Argentina, supposedly for the purpose of a book on the "Final Solution". Bruno Baum's book *Widerstand in Auschwitz* (Resistance in Auschwitz) is published in East Berlin. Jan Sehn's documentation *Konzentrationslager Auschwitz-Birkenau* published in Warsaw.

Events

2 September. Albert Paraz, who wrote the preface to Rassinier's *Le Mensonge d'Ulysse*, passes away, aged 57.

Historical context

In late January Israel withdraws from the Sinai Peninsula. Eisenhower is inaugurated for a second presidential term. The Suez Canal is reopened in March. Martial law declared in Indonesia. In April, the first conscripts join the West German Bundeswehr. Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* published in September. In December all Dutch nationals are expelled from Indonesia.

1958

Background

On 1 March, career criminal and former Auschwitz inmate Adolf Rögner files charges against the former SS-Oberscharführer Wilhelm Boger, an event which would lead to the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial. Elie Wiesel's Auschwitz memoirs, *La Nuit* (Night), are published by Editions de Minuit in Paris. Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss's memoirs, *Kommandant in Auschwitz*, are published in West Germany, edited by Martin Broszat. On 9 October, Pius XII, alleged to have been "Hitler's Pope", dies. The Zentralstelle zur Verfolgung nationalsozialistischer Gewaltverbrechen (Central Office for the resolution of National-Socialist crimes) is established in Ludwigsburg, West Germany.

Events

20 November. A letter written by Stephen F. Pinter (1888-1985) is published in the weekly *Deutsche Wochenschrift*. In his letter, Pinter questions the veracity of a recent Associated Press report stating that the ashes of 3000 Russian, French, Yugoslav and Polish victims of the concentration camp Flossenbürg had been given a reburial. Pinter states that, according on his own investigations as a judicial magistrate following the end of the war, the total number of Flossenbürg victims amounted to no more than 300 people.

Undated. Louis (Lajos) Marschalko's book *The World Conquerors. The Real War Criminals* (translated into English from a manuscript in Hungarian) is published in London by Joseph Sueli. Chapter 11 of this book is entitled "What Has Become of Six Million Jews?" Here the author discusses the origin of the six-million figure in the statements of Wilhelm Hoettl, as well as the Madagascar plan and the pre-war National Socialist policy of Jewish emigration. Marschalko considers it "unlikely" that the outbreak of the war caused a switch to a policy of extermination, while concluding that the "Final solution of the Jewish question" was territorial in nature. He further suggests that especially the eastern Jews suffered heavy losses due to the partisan warfare and reprisal actions linked to it, while generally dismissing the gas-chamber and extermination-camp allegations as propaganda. Marschalko also points out the Allied nations' curious silence on the Jewish "exterminations" during the war. Moreover the author writes (without, however, providing a source) that German POWs had to "reconstruct" a gas chamber at Dachau and also notes that the crematorium ovens at Dachau were completely inadequate for the incineration of the number of victims claimed at that time (238,000). Finally, the author disputes the six-million figure from a demographic-statistical viewpoint, based primarily on the arguments found in the 1946 Baseler Nachrichten article.^[2] Special attention is given to the Hungarian Jews: Jewish claims of 600,000 dead Hungarian Jews are contrasted with a *New York Times* article stating the same number as 200,000 and official Hungarian statistics reporting losses of merely 120,000 Hungarian Jews (again the author provides no exact references). Based on reported numbers of displaced Hungarian Jews, Marschalko concludes that the real number of perished Hungarian Jews amounted to approximately 60,000 people.

Undated. The article "Entmythologisierung der 6-Millionen-Zahl" (no author given) is published in *Deutsche Hochschullehrer-Zeitung* (German High School Teacher Newspaper) (predecessor of Deutschland in Geschichte und Gegenwart) (Germany in History and Context), Vol. 6, No. 2, p. 25.

Historical context

In February Egypt and Syria unite to form the United Arab Republic, Nasser becomes its president. Khrushchev becomes Premier of the Soviet Union in late March. In April, Castro's revolutionary army begins attacks on Havana. On June 16, Imre Nagy is hanged for treason in Hungary. In July, the Iraqi

monarchy is overthrown by Arab nationalists. British and U.S. troops sent to Jordan and Lebanon. On December 31, Cuban president Fulgencio Batista resigns.

1959

Background

The construction of the concrete-block "memorial" on the former site of Treblinka II begins. Olga Lengyel's Auschwitz memoirs *Five Chimneys* are published in London. Rudolf Höss's memoirs are published in English and French.

Events

14 June 1959. A letter written by Stephen F. Pinter is published in *Our Sunday Visitor*, p. 15 under the heading "German Atrocities". In it, Pinter writes that "there were no gas chambers in any of the concentration camps in Germany", and that while he and other judicial officials had been told about "a gas chamber at Auschwitz", the Soviets had not allowed them to investigate that claim. Pinter also disputes the six-million figure, suggesting that the actual number of Jewish victims was less than one million.

1 July 1959. Austin J. App writes a letter entitled "The Inflated Figure of 6,000,000" [\[3\]](#) addressed to the Philadelphia newspaper *The Inquirer*, in which he states the six-million figure to be a product of Soviet propaganda and completely unproven. It is unknown whether this letter was published.

Undated. The article "Dokumente zur Endlösung der Judenfrage" is published in *Deutsche Hochschullehrer-Zeitung*, Vol. 7, No. 3-4, pp. 5-13. [\[4\]](#) The article does not dispute the alleged extermination per se, [\[5\]](#) but suggests that it was planned and carried out by a very small group of conspirators (who are claimed by the anonymous author to have been Catholic fifth-columnists, among them the head of Gestapo Heinrich Müller and Adolf Eichmann, out to destroy Germany's honor!), and that Hitler had nothing to do with them until he somehow learned of them and ordered them stopped. The primary value of this article lies in the quotes from court material that it presents.

Undated. A German edition of Rassiner's *Le Mensonge d'Ulysse* (Die Lüge des Odysseus or The Lies of Ulysses) is published in Wiesbaden by Verlag Karl Heinz Priester as part of the series "Zeitgeschichtliche Dokumentation" ("Historical Documentation").

Undated. Swedish far right writer Einar Åberg publishes a brief pamphlet entitled "Proof that the Jewish allegation of Hitler having gassed 6 million Jews is a big lie" in which he disputes the six-million figure by referring to various statistical sources, primarily the World Almanac. [\[6\]](#)

Historical context

In January Fidel Castro takes control over Cuba. In March, an uprising against the Chinese occupiers of Tibet erupts; the 14th Dalai Lama escapes to India. Hawaii becomes the 50th US state in August. Antarctic Treaty signed in December. Britain starts selling heavy water (an material for making nuclear weapons) to Israel. The first post-war census conducted in the USSR.

1960

Background

On May 11, Adolf Eichmann, living in Buenos Aires under the alias Ricardo Klement, is abducted by Mossad agents. A week later he is smuggled out of the country. On May 21 he reaches Israel.

Events

March. Paul Rassinier's article "'Le Commandant d'Auschwitz parle'. Un document historique ou le roman chez la portière?" is published in *Défense de l'Occident*, No. 3, pp. 36-44. In this article, Rassinier analyzes the recently published memoirs of the former Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss and compares it with his testimony from the Nuremberg Trial, highlighting a number of internal and external contradictions, while also taking note of the fact that Höss had been tortured by his British captors. Most significantly, Rassinier observed that Höss on one hand specifies the handling of the supposed killing agent Zyklon B as being very dangerous, while on the other hand he describes the members of the "Sonderkommando" as removing the bodies from the gas chambers immediately after the gassings, sometimes while eating and smoking (i.e. not wearing gas masks), without any accidents ever occurring—an observation that years later would be further developed by Robert Faurisson.

24 March – 8 April. Rassinier holds a tour of lectures on the theme "Historical truth or political truth?" in Hamburg and fourteen other West German cities, as well as Vienna.

18 June. The weekly *Deutschen Wochenzeitung* reports that Munich bishop and former Dachau inmate Dr. Johannes Neuhäusler during a press conference held in connection with the beginning of the construction of a chapel at the former camp site stated that no gas chamber had ever been put into use at Dachau, and that therefore the claim that 75,000 inmates had been gassed there was false. The bishop mentioned the official victim estimate presented by the Town of Dachau, according to which 20,000 inmates had perished in the camp, as well as the International Tracing Service's estimate of 29,000 victims, and further stated his intention to write a pamphlet entitled "Die Wahrheit über Dachau" (The truth about Dachau) to be disseminated at an upcoming ecclesiastical world congress in Munich.

July. A German translation of three recent articles and lectures by Rassinier (including the above mentioned one on Höss), an exchange of letters with Eugen Kogon (in which Kogon threatens Rassinier, as well as his German publisher, with legal prosecution) and a foreword by the author is published in Wiesbaden by Verlag Karl Heinz Priester under the title *Was nun, Odysseus? Zur Bewältigung der Vergangenheit* (What Now, Odysseus? On the Manipulation of the Past).

19 August. A letter from Dr. Martin Broszat of the Institute for Contemporary History (Institut für Zeitgeschichte) appears in the Hamburg weekly *Die Zeit*, stating that "Neither in Dachau nor in Bergen-Belsen nor in Buchenwald were Jews or other prisoners gassed" and that "The mass extermination of the Jews by gassing began in 1941-1942 and occurred exclusively in a few facilities selected and equipped with appropriate technical installations, above all in the occupied Polish territory (but at no place in the Old Reich)".^[7]

December. An extract from Rassinier's forthcoming book *Ulysse trahi par les siens* (Ulysses Betrayed by His Own) is published in *Lectures Françaises*, No. 44-45, pp. 14-23.

Historical context

In February the CERN particle accelerator is inaugurated near Geneva. In March, the Sharpesville massacre takes place in South Africa. In June, Belgian Congo gains independence; civil war follows. In November, John F. Kennedy is elected president of the United States. In December the OECD is formed in Paris.

Commentary

By the late 1950s, Holocaust revisionism was still very much affected by the childhood diseases typical of pioneer criticism. Most seriously, many texts were unfortunately marked by a lack of exact references in accordance with standard scientific criteria. Also lacking is a focus on official reports and material deriving from court proceedings, as well as the emerging Holocaust historiography (Reitlinger, Hilberg, Poliakov); rather, most revisionist texts from this period discuss the extermination allegations as presented by the media and a relatively small number of published witness testimonies.

There are three points of special interest to be found in our survey of the years 1956-1960. The first is Poliakov's criticism of Reitlinger in 1956. Despite admitting that, with regards to the Jews in Eastern Poland and the Soviet Union "estimates are complicated by population movements during and after the war" as well as a "total absence of reliable statistical data", Poliakov—whose victim figure includes 2 million Jews exterminated at Auschwitz,^[8] whereas Reitlinger puts the same figure at between 800,000 and 900,000—staunchly defended "the 'classic' total of 6 million", which had emerged as a dogmatic figure already during the Nuremberg trial.

The second point is Rassinier's pioneer analysis of Höss's memoirs. Here is reached a milestone in the development of Holocaust revisionism, namely the emergence of a discussion on the technical feasibility of the alleged mass gassings. This new focus would naturally give the revisionists an upper hand, as the early Holocaust historians had not at all considered the physical reality behind their claims.

The third and last point is the 1960 Broszat letter. The final paragraph of this text makes it clear that it was written as a response to early revisionism (Broszat does not name Rassinier or any other revisionist writer, but instead speaks of "some ineducable people" who "make use of a few arguments that, while correct, are polemically taken out of context"). This shows that Holocaust historians were aware of the revisionists already from the start, and that by 1960 they had already adopted the strategy of discreetly cutting out the most untenable parts of the gas chamber mythos (without even for a moment considering the evidential foundation of the remainder) while avoiding naming the revisionists whose writings made these tactical retreats necessary.

Notes:

- [1] *Études révisionnistes*, vol. 2, Cercle antitotalitaire, Saint-Genis-Laval 2002, pp. 118-235.
- [2] See the first part of this article series.
- [3] Available online at: <http://www.codoh.com/viewpoints/vpaainflate.html>
- [4] The full text of this article is available online at: http://www.vho.org/D/DGG/IDN7_34.html

- [5] It does however bring the six-million figure into question, citing an article by an unnamed Jewish statistician reportedly appearing in the San Diego, California publication *The Broom* in May 1952, according to which there were merely 350,000 – 500,000 Jewish deaths. How such a low figure fits with the presented conspiracy theory is not made clear.
- [6] A Spanish translation of the pamphlet is found in an online Spanish edition of Thies Christophersen's *Die Auschwitz-Lüge*, as an appendix on pp. 39-40: <http://www.vho.org/aaargh/fran/livres5/Thieses.pdf>
- [7] The full text of the letter is reproduced online at: <http://codoh.com/incon/inconbrozat.html>
- [8] Léon Poliakov, *Bréviare de la Haine*, Calmann-Lévy, Paris 1951, pp. 231-232.

Author(s) :	Thomas Kues
Title:	A Chronicle of Holocaust Revisionism, Part 3 (1956-1960)
Sources:	<i>Inconvenient History</i> , 2(3) (2010)
Dates:	published: 2010-10-01, first posted: 2014-02-15 00:00:00

<http://inconvenienthistory.com/2/3/3120>